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TRADE UNIONS:

The Swiss trade unions have formed a General Association of Swiss Trade Unions claiming 350,000 members. Information about the principal unions making up the Association is given here:

1. The Union of Workers in the Metallurgical and Watch-Making Industries is the richest and most influential union, comprising about 100,000 members. Politically it is conservative. It favors the use of direct action (strikes), instead of the protection of heavy industry by the "peace" agreement valid until 1952. (The agreement was made in 1938 for a period of seven years and renewed for another seven years). Principal leaders are Dr. Konrad Ilg, a National Counsellor, and Rene Robert, a National Counsellor. Both are right-wing Socialists.

2. The Union of Commercial, Transportation, and Food Industry Workers is second in importance and comprises about 55,000 members. It is moderate politically, but slightly more radical than the union for metallurgical workers and watch-makers. Hermann Leugenberger, a National Counsellor, is leader.

3. The Railway Workers' Union has about 50,000 members and is directed by Robert Bratschi, a National Counsellor, who is a conservative Socialist. The union is rich and moderate.

4. The Construction and Lumber Workers' Union comprises about 45,000 members. Leader is a moderate Socialist, Oldani, a National Counsellor. The union has radical tendencies and has recently organized several strikes. Document No. 003

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5. The Textile and Factory Workers' Union has between 40-45,000 members. In the last few years, this union has become fairly strong. It is the most radical of the Swiss unions and is directly under the guidance of the Labor Party (Communist). Leon Loew of Basel is director. In the last few months of 1946, this union successfully organized several strikes.
6. Among the smaller unions are The Clothing and Leather Industry Workers' Union, led by Bircher; The Printers' Union, whose head is Segesser, a National Counsellor, and The Post Office Employees' Union. The combined membership of these three unions is said to be 50,000. They all are moderate politically and are well-organized. The Public Utilities Union, comprising about 30,000 members, is a conservative group directed until the end of 1946 by National Counsellor Oprecht. The Catholic and Protestant Unions and The Anti-Marxist Union both are weak and play little part in Swiss trade union activities.

UNION POLICY:

7. A general strike currently is unlikely. Many Swiss unions feel obliged to honor contracts made with managers. Orders of the General Association dictate this policy.
8. The General Association shuns a political stand, but its attitude corresponds to that of the Social Democrat Party, in which a number of the union leaders, including Bratschi and Leuenberger, are prominent. The Textile and Factory Workers' Union, however, takes a radical stand.
9. Swiss unions politically are likely to remain fixed for some time. They own most of the Socialist newspapers in Switzerland and contribute generously to the finances of the Socialist Party. Candidates in the general and regional elections virtually must be approved by the unions to appear on the party list.
10. Most of the unions have one representative in the Swiss National Council. The Metallurgical Workers' Union has eight. Altogether the unions have 35 representatives in the Council which totals 174 advisors.
11. The General Association of Swiss Trade Unions takes part in the International Trade Union Organization, but it condemns Communist and pro-Soviet tendencies. Suggestions recently have been made that the General Association of Swiss Unions withdraw from the international organization and adopt a strictly neutral line of action in an independent national body.

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